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ORIGINAL COMMUNICATION.

On Lord Byron's Letter to Mr. Murray.

"A glosse there is to cover this *paradox*, and make it appear in *show* not to be altogether unreasonable."—HOOKER.

We had not anticipated a revival of the controversy between Mr. Campbell and Mr. Bowles upon the subject of nature and of art, as sources of the sublime in writing and association—and least of all did we imagine that an advocate of art would have presented himself in the author of *Childe Harold*; we had no idea that lord Byron's poetical taste had so much of the alloy of the French metal; but as gold, in order to become *current coin*, must suffer mixture with baser ore, perhaps the noble critic, reasoning from analogy, was aware that with a view of being understood and of passing freely into the standard of the general sense, it was necessary to undergo the usual process, and suffer the pure gold of his native genius to be transmuted into the common coin: the satire which has been passed upon the science (if science it may have been called) of alchemy, may well be applied to this much vaunted science of art—*ars sine arte*—*cujus principium est mentiri*—medium laborare—*et finis mendicare*—that is—to beg—the question—but too often indeed—upon this question of art—the “vaulting ambition” of his lordship's genius has “o'erleap'd itself and fallen on the other side.” Mr. Bowles may have been extravagant enough in his “babble of green fields,” but lord Byron out-herods Herod in his paradoxes of art. Association, although according to Locke it be the grand source of error to the *mind*, is yet the precious elixir, and, at the same time, the withering upas of our moral frame of being; like the coast of Coromandel, it presents us alike with the sunshine and the storm of life's great ocean—and lord Byron

must know this from *experience*. But the principle of association is at variance with the principle of art, and is not therefore referred to by the advocate of writings which are blended with much that is mean in association and all that is commonplace in art. What appears to us to be the great error of lord Byron, is his mistaking the *associations* of art for certain *intrinsic* qualities of beauty, sublimity and fitness, *inherent* in art itself; and that he does confound artificial objects themselves with their *abstract* or *particular relations*, as the case may be, is evident from the whole tenor of his letter. Now, this is a palpable misconception of things, and the “poetry of art” is as palpable a misnomer. Metaphysicians tell us that there are no *inherent* properties in any object: “Flavour and colour,” says Berkeley, “are in the *nose* and the *eye*, and not in the *flower*.” Allison contends, if we recollect his essay, that there is no *intrinsic* sublimity in the sound of *thunder*, because its imitation on the stage has deceived children—but refers the impression which it makes upon us, to an association with eternal power, and indeed with many others; he even goes so far as to assert that there is no object in nature which possesses any *intrinsic* qualities whatever—thus making association the grand *primum mobile* of all our affections. But although we cannot stretch this doctrine quite so far, yet does it hold good to a certain extent—to *such* a length as to overthrow, we apprehend, the theory of art. We would ask lord Byron whether he thinks a steam-ship, (if he has ever seen one) where every thing is art, impelling itself along the calm waters of a humble river, with all the regularity of artificial mechanism, as poetical an object as a ship of the line, struggling with the waves of the mighty ocean? The one is emblematic of toil and human industry—full of the dull prose of every day life—the other associates with

the grandest element in nature—in conflicting with its storm and repining at its calm—in the convulsive heaves of its gallant frame—in the creaking of its timbers and the flapping of its sails—the mind is irresistibly led to reflections upon human life—its alternations of hope and fear—its dark, and sometimes glorious vicissitudes. We have seen many sail lying in an offing in a dark and squally night—steadily riding midst the gradual rise of the winds and swell of the sea—while the small craft were scudding for safe mooring—while we heard the baring of windows and saw the putting out of lights—every thing apparently retreating from the angry approach of the tempest—these veterans of the wave, though anxious, were undismayed, and darkling in the distance, met and breasted the swell of the angry waters, with all the consciousness of danger, but with all the calmness of resolution. Now, the vessels certainly contributed to the poetry of the scene, but they did not make it: the sea would have been fearfully sublime warring with its *own* strength alone in darkness and convulsion. Take the canal of Languedoc—the wall of China—the pyramids—the Acropolis—take any glorious remain of the olden time, or illustration of the present—the great epic of the *Ecce Homo* of West—Canova's statue of Washington—Fulton's steam-frigate, or any other achievement of art, and in what will its “poetry” be found to consist? In moral and intellectual association, surely, and not in any exquisite combination of the elements of *material* beauty or sublimity. With regard to the *painting*, lord Byron will tell us that it is poetical because it “presupposes poetry in its very conception;” true—and it is this very association with *mind* which imparts its interest to the canvass; take away the idea of intellectual power, and the mere artificial object dwindles into nothing. It is for this very reason that his

lordship's *own* poetry is so powerfully rivetting; it is the vast display of mental energy, and not a conformity to artificial rule, which constitutes poetry. Art makes its appeal to nature after all; images drawn from the sublimities of nature must possess a corresponding elevation, and in their positive and not abstract degree; so do all allusions to art; but as objects connected with the latter are immeasurably lower in the scale of conception and execution, than those associated with the former, so all images taken from art must labour under proportional inferiority to images referred to nature. Which is most poetical, the pyramids or the desert in which they stand? Lord Byron will reply that the desert is like all other deserts, and that were it not for the pyramids—their mysterious origin—the perfection of their marble and execution—the desert would cease to interest; true, and so is the converse: the pyramids removed to Grand Cairo, would still retain their attractions as objects of art and artificial genius, but would lose half their poetry in being divested of that peculiar sublimity which associates with the might and majesty of nature; and why is it that lord Byron's own image, drawn from these objects. (Monody on Sheridan) is unfortunate?—because it is applied to an unworthy illustration—at least, one unworthy of the great image:

“To pile the pyramid of Calumny.”

We associate with the pyramid much that is sublime in nature and all that is wonderful in art; to illustrate so foul an idea by so magnificent an image, was unhappy, to say the least of it: the depth, and even the durability of calumny, corresponding with that of the pyramid, was appropriate enough; but in every other quality characteristic of the mighty pyramid, the idea is at variance with the illustration; but even did they correspond, we must still think that the poet had better have resorted to nature for an image illustrative of the gradual accumulation of filthy moral matter. Instead of the pyramid, why not have given us the simple image of the *mountain*, such as we have it in the fourth canto of *Childe Harold*?

“—— And pile on human heads the mountain of my curse.”

This is appropriate and forcible—far more so than the image in the Monody. Milton's image, drawn from the same source, sustains its own elevation from that of the subject—

“Springs upward like a pyramid of fire Into the wild expanse,——”

the darting figure of Satan is likened to the pyramid, and chaos is the desert; there is a strict *keeping* in the image here. Why is the tomb of Themistocles, upon the Turkish promontory, a more poetical object than a stone Sarcophagus, or a marble monument of Westminster Abbey? Because it associates with the boundlessness of nature—he who subdued the mighty host of Xerxes, and lorded it over the majestic ocean, is appropriately placed near the great element with which his memory is associated. Egyptian Thebes, with her hundred gates, was called the City of the *Sun*, by him who built her; and lord Byron himself terms some Italian town, “A fairy City of the *Heart*.”—the former, from its magnificence, was well associated with the sun, and the latter, from its fairy texture, with the delicate symmetry of the heart. We recollect, in walking over the battle ground in Canada, where the brave general Pike fell, his burial spot was pointed out to us, by an English soldier:

“No *column* trophied for triumphal show,”

was there, to mark the resting place of his gallant spirit; but, “the moral's truth told simpler so.”—*Nature* was around him—his dirge was the breeze of the forest, and we felt that moral's truth more powerfully than we should have done, had we been contemplating an *artificial* cemetery. The poetry of Scripture is beyond that of Paradise Lost—the power which said, “Let there be light: and there was light”—suggests an idea of greater immensity than the mechanical process made use of according to Milton, in measuring and settling the limits of “this great globe.”

“—— And in his hand

He took the golden compasses, prepar'd In God's eternal store, to circumscribe The universe.”

The natural operation is far before

the artificial mechanism; when contrasted with the “word,” the “golden compasses” shrink into nothingness—though in Milton it is still a sublime description.

It is a great while since we read Mr. Campbell's letter to Mr. Bowles, but we recollect their dispute about Milton's image “of the mast of some great admiral,” to illustrate the idea of his Satanic majesty's strength of muscle; by telling us that he walked with a spear,

“——to equal which the tallest pine Hewn on *Norwegian hills*, to be the mast

Of some great admiral, were but a wand,”

was not perhaps to convey an adequate conception of the “Superior Fiend's” might of nerve—for, alas! Ariosto makes his Orlando bear no less a weight, when in his fury he tears up “huge pines” by their roots: but the “*artificial image*” is the thing in question; it is not perhaps very sublime at best, and is less so for being “artificial.” Does lord Byron suppose that because of its connection with a ship, an artificial object, the image is sublime?—the massy pine would have been the same great object placed *any where else*; and had the poet told us that such were its dimensions, it might have served to prop a falling forest, he would have conveyed a stronger image than he has done by referring us to a ship. But again: is there not as much weight in the circumstance of the pine's having been “hewn on *Norwegian hills*,” as in that of its serving “to be the mast of some great admiral?” We know not whether the allusion to the “hills,” particularly “*Norwegian hills*,” be not far beyond that to the ship, with respect both to the poetry of association and of *place*; for nature possesses her own peculiar, and, we may say, *inherent* poetry; but not so art. The name of Themistocles is derived from *θεμις*, and *κλος*, *Justice* and *Glory*—two qualities more truly associating with *Nature* and her *God*, than the Athenian ostracism, or the Roman eagles.

With regard to “the villainous saltpetre,” and the engines of Milton's devils, these can be of no avail to the advocate of *art*, although the product of art, and they are the meaner for being so in the hands of

the *rebel spirits*. To oppose the sovereignty of Heaven, with materials of warfare which not unfrequently carry destruction to the sovereignty of Earth, was almost impious, certainly injudicious; the "gamesome mood" of Belial, lapses into burlesque, and really the devils themselves appear to laugh at their own invention. Lord Byron says, that, standing upon one of the Symplegades, he "felt all the poetry of the place; but," he asks "would it not have been *heightened* by the presence of the *Argo*?"—perhaps so; but still more by the *golden fleece* and the *dragon*, we apprehend. He says, in another place, if the sun, and the winds, and the waves, "confer poetry," they would make *any thing* poetical; but *can* genius, which may be likened to the sun, make poetry out of a "footman's livery," or a "brass warming-pan?" One of the ancients, Plato, we believe, likens the *passions*, which "fret the pigmy body to decay," to the *sails* of a ship—the sails impelling the ship as the passions do the body; but this very body *clogs* their aspirations. As the winds and the waves, the one whistling through "the chinks of a pigstye," and the other creaming and mantling in the "*London dock*," though possessed of their *own* poetry, yet cannot "confer" any upon places and objects like the above, because they are *essentially mean and low*; in the same way that a colloquial phrase, introduced into tragedy, can never be divested of its common place, though enveloped in surrounding beauties of language and conception; it is still the *pigmy*, though perched on an *Alp*. Longinus illustrates sublimity by *images* drawn from the natural world, and so does Shakspeare:

"How sweet the moonlight sleeps on yonder bank!"

more sweet by far than it could do upon "pyramids, fleets, and fortresses"—the associations awakened by the line of the poet, are those of Love and Beauty.—Nature confers poetry—art only assists it—the former is generally poetical in *itself*—the latter becomes so from association—"if the sun shone neither upon pyramids, fleets, nor fortresses, would its beams be equally poetical?" asks lord Byron; not equally *poetical*, but

they would still be *beautiful*; the sun would still be the same *sublime eternal* sun, that shines alike upon the *Mirage* and the pyramid of the desert; *poetical* objects and associations are not *always* those of *perfect beauty* or *sublimity*. "What would the pyramid be without the sun, and what would the sun be without the pyramid?"—again asks lord Byron; why the sun shining on an *universal desert*, would be still *sublime*—while the pyramid, deprived of the sun, would lose half its *poetry* in losing half its *extrinsic beauty*—association would remain 'tis true. What renders the granite pillars which stand between the palace of St. Marks and the sea poetical? is it the granite of which they are composed, or their situation near the palace? *neither*, we apprehend—it is the association of *death* which gathers round them and invests them with their fearful interest.—The canal of Egypt built by Alexander, though almost dried up, is still poetical, because it associates with the memory of greatness—the palaces, churches, and spires of Venice are poetical, not so much because they are palaces, churches and spires—as for the association with *old Venice*, and "her hundred isles" of feudal fame; there is something ridiculous in the annual ceremony of wedding the Adriatic—but the scene possesses "its poetry," we shall be told; and in what does that poetry consist? in the splendid group of spectators and gondolas, or in the golden ring with which the majestic bride is greeted? rather in the *moral* of the scene, we should say—in the contrast between the vain pomp of him who weds, and the simple majesty of her who is wedded; the mystic silence with which she receives the bridal gift, consigning it to darkness and oblivion as though she spurned the splendid mockery.

There is a *magic* in the *ruined* battlement—so we are most eloquently told in *Childe Harold*; and truly—and why? the mind may revert to the former glory of the battlement, but it is the triumph of nature over art, of time over human achievement in its ruin—it is the sacred halo which the sunset of ages has diffused around it, which constitutes that mysterious and ineffable charm that sets its seal upon the

heart and the imagination, in contemplating "the things of earth which time hath bent."

"For these, the palace of the *present hour*,
Must yield its pomp"—

Thus speaks the advocate of *art* himself. No poet of the present day, and not Pope himself, has been more indebted to art than Moore, although he affects to agree with Bowles—and it is for this reason that his poetry cloys so much; it is a luscious feast that palls the intellectual or rather the sensual appetite—glittering fountains, gewgaw grottos, and a thousand other affectations of luxurious art, follow in sickening succession along the "primrose path" of his sated muse. Which was the most poetical object at the burning of Moscow, Napoleon, standing like an angel of desolation, amidst the flames, or the *palace* of the czars enveloped in their fury? Surely, upon the canvass the most powerfully attractive object would be the *man*; the sullen disappointment portrayed in his expressive countenance, contrasting with the work of destruction before him, the whole association that would gather round his mystic being, would exclude every reflection or observation that did not point to the wonderful *human* object. Thus, without the glorious alchymy of association, the dross of art could never be transmuted into the gold droppings of beauty and sublimity, and so far from the truth is lord Byron's assertion, that nature and art "reciprocate poetry," that art deprived of nature or association would be left without poetry, while nature is as poetical without art as with it—lord Byron puts the effect for the cause, when he says, or seems to say, that artificial objects *give rise* to poetry—it is association gathering round such objects that confers their poetry. Were it not for the memory of Jason and Medea, the *Argo* would be like any merchant vessel to the fancy—the self-sought fate of *Appho* has consecrated the recollection of the *Iucadian Rock*, 'tis true—but the rock prying, as it were, into the black abyss, would have remained poetical had *Sappho* never approached it. Lord Byron thinks that the storm in the Archipelago, which he describes, was the more poetical for

the number of "small craft" that were seen "darting over the foam in the twilight"—so too, did Addison admire the description of Dover Cliff; for the appearance of the "choughs and crows"—these objects he contended heightened the effect of the prospect; but we must think with Johnson, that this specifying of particulars, so far from aiding, lessened the impression made upon the mind: space filled alone with the *feeling* of horror, is far more pregnant with sublime effect, than space broken by intervening objects—the "palpable obscure, the vast abrupt," through which Milton's hero winged his flight, is sublime from the very absence of all materiality. We never felt more forcibly the truth of Johnson's remark upon the description of Dover Cliff, than in witnessing, a few years ago, a night prospect of the ocean, from a high and rocky eminence at a place called *Nohant*, in the state of Massachusetts—the "billowy boundlessness" of the ocean lay before us, night sat brooding as it were, upon its troubled bosom, a storm was gathering, nothing but the dull hoarse murmur of the agitated element, united with the low mysterious sound of the rising wind, was to be heard—nothing to be seen but the "wide waste of waters dark and deep;" no solitary star, no artificial light from any *sail*, no human sound—night and storm, and danger and desolation, were around, and only these—no other agents were there to heighten the grand poetical effect; and it was grand, fearfully grand indeed—then, and only then, for the first time, did we feel the power of nature, when roused to a display of her energies—any artificial object, so far from heightening or even *aiding* the scene, would have *broken* the wonderful *whole* of the unequalled picture. Thus then, without examining the many examples adduced by lord Byron in support of his theory of art—and they are so numerous as to fatigue the attention. We are decidedly of opinion, and we state it briefly, that in all the higher elements of beauty and sublimity, nature is before art—it is commonly said, that art *improves* upon nature; in *trifles* this may be true, but not so in *essentials*—art may make the "desert smile," a

garden of a stable—but has Salvatore Rosa ever *rivalled* the great features of *mountain majesty*? Tint the rose tints of an evening sky, or of living beauty's cheek; we apprehend not. What pencil or what pen can *adequately* convey an image of *Niagara* with its "hell of waters?" Byron himself, although he has approached nearer to the sublimity of nature, in his description of *Velino*, than art has ever yet done: his picture is still but a mighty aspiration—the stars are still *above* him. One remark here, which we have omitted in its proper place—lord Byron says of Milton, that he was "*blasphemous*" in putting materiality into the hands of the Godhead, alluding to the "thunderbolts;" but surely there was nothing even inappropriate in this: the Almighty may very consistently be supposed to make use of the elements of his *own creation*; the thunder was not unworthy of him, because it was *formed by him*.

S.

Poems, by P. M. James. 12mo. pp. 224. Arch, London, 1821.

[From the London Literary Gazette.]

In this small volume of Poems the compositions are of so slight a nature as to preclude critical remark; and if we say that the pieces are generally pleasing, the sentiments moral, and the style (with a few exceptions of lame rhythm) agreeable, we shall have spoken all the truth, and done the author justice. Mr James, we understand, adds another to the catalogue of bards belonging to the Society of Friends. Not aiming so high as Barton or Wiffen, (to the latter of whom we owe a review for his late translation from Tasso,) he has struck a very musical chord, and seems gifted with those feelings which constitute the poet. He must, however, be more careful in preserving harmony in his measures; we copy two or three specimens.

THE PILGRIM AND THE PRIESTS.

Or, the Three Good Things of Malvern.

[A tale of the "olden tyme."]

"Sweetly was chanted the evening hymn,

At the sound of the vesper bell;

The Pilgrim had knelt at our Lady's shrine,

He had drank at our Lady's well.

The sun had nigh set, and the Monks had all met,

And the anthem had died away:

The hearth blazed bright, and the torch pour'd its light

On the Priests and their goodly array.

'I have seen,' said the Pilgrim, 'the tremendous wave

That murmurs at Galilee still;

But never so sweet did the shadow fall,

As it falls o'er Malvern hill.

'I have wandered afar for my penance

and pain,

Where the breezes of Lebanon blow;

But richer the gales that o'er Malvern

rise,

From the apple bowers below.

'The mountains are green and the land

is good,

And your turrets are fair to see;

And for three good things is Malvern

fam'd—

Now tell these three things unto me.

'Oh! are they the SHRINE of our Lady

dear,

And the PENANCE of Benedict's sway?

And the third the WELL with the waters

clear,

That run to the rising ray?"

Then up rose a Friar, and laugh'd as

he rose,

And his flagon he fill'd to the brim;

(No Priest in the Abbey of Great Mal-

vern,

Sung mass or shrived sinners like him.)

His eye and his cheek were bright with

the gale

Of the hills where the red deer run;

For the Friar had hasten'd from Little

Malvern,

Where he had been shriving a Nun.

'What knave,' cried the Friar, 'could

wander so far,

Yet hold us such ignorant elves?

Sir Pilgrim, tho' beadsmen of penance

may preach,

Yet they love somewhat better them-

selves.

'Lo! the chase wide extends round our

ample domain,

And the Severn runs proud at our feet;

And the orchards that spread o'er the

prospect afar,

Yield cider bright, sparkling, and

sweet.

'Let Pilgrims still drink of the crystalline

spring,

And sinners on pilgrimage pass;

Give Beadsmen fresh SALMON and dainty

red DEER,

And LIQUOR that foams in the glass!"

THE NEGRO'S LAMENT FOR MUNGO

PARK.

"Where the wild Joliba

Rolls his deep waters,

Sate at their evening toil

Afric's dark daughters;

Where the thick mangroves

Broad shadows were flinging,

Each o'er her low loom

Bent mournfully singing—

Alas, for the white man, o'er deserts a
ranger!
No more shall we welcome the white-bo-
som'd stranger!

'Thro' the deep forest
Fierce lions are prowling;
Mid thickets entangling
Hyenas are howling.
'There should he wander,
Where danger lurks ever,
To his home where the sun sets,
Return shall he never!

Alas, for the white man, o'er deserts a
ranger!
No more shall we welcome the white-bo-
som'd stranger!

'The bands of the Moor,
In his wrath do they bind him?
Oh! sealed in his doom,
If the savage Moor find him!
'More fierce than hyenas
Thro' darkness advancing,
Is the curse of the Moor,
And his eyes fiery glancing!

Alas, for the white man, o'er deserts a
ranger!
No more shall we welcome the white-bo-
som'd stranger!

'A voice from the desert—
My wilds do not hold him;
Pale thirst doth not rack,
Nor the sand-storm enfold him!
The death-gale past by,
And his breath failed to smother;
Yet ne'er shall he wake
To the voice of his mother!

Alas, for the white man, o'er deserts a
ranger!
No more shall we welcome the white-bo-
som'd stranger!

'O, lov'd of the Lotus,
Thy waters adorning;
Pour, Joliba! pour
Thy full stream to the morning!
'The halcyon may fly
To thy wave as her pillow;
Yet woe to the white man
Who trusts in thy billow!

Alas, for the white man, o'er deserts a
ranger!
No more shall we welcome the white-bo-
som'd stranger!

'He launch'd his light bark,
Our fond warnings despising;
And sailed to the land
Where the day-beams are rising.
'His wife from her bower
May look forth in her sorrow;
But he shall ne'er come
To her hope of to-morrow!

Alas, for the white man, o'er deserts a
ranger!
No more shall we welcome the white-bo-
som'd stranger!"

THE IVY AND PAINTED WINDOW.

"Through Malvern's sweet village
strange rumours were spread,
That a plot had been laid and the
church was in danger!

The tidings had fill'd every villager's
head,
And the noise it occasioned alarm'd
every stranger.

The report thus arose—a green ivy had
grown
Up the walls of the church, the old
structure adorning;
'Till it reach'd the east window, where
gaily were shown
Apostles and saints in the bright hues
of morning.

And it still must be own'd that 'twas
pleasant to see
The sun and the wind with the ivy
leaves dally;
To hear round it's blossoms the hum of
the bee,
That came lured by their sweets from
the mountain or valley.

And when the day sunk on the bosom of
night,
Like a sport-wearied child on the
breast of it's mother;
We then soothingly might say by the sum-
mer moon's light,
That the ivy and window were made
for each other.

The night-hawk that roams like a spirit
thro' air,
Led his bride to it's chambers with ten-
der caresses;
'Midst it's branches the owl built her pa-
lace so fair,
And rear'd her gray brood in it's dark
green recesses.

Thus time flew away, till arose a com-
plaint,
That the ivy, grown wanton and evil
designing,
In its gambols had knock'd out the head
of a saint,
And had ruin'd a nun with its twisting
and twining.

Nay, the parish clerk swore that an owl
from her den,
Had look'd into the church thro' a
pane that was broken;
That the owl cried to-who! while the
clerk cried amen!
And the ivy was blam'd for so evil a to-
ken.

And 'twas said that the boughs which
crown'd buttress and arch,
The ravage of ages with verdure re-
newing,
Like a wreath for the forehead of Time
on his march,
Now hung o'er the fane like the omen
of ruin.

Just like love when it touches the reso-
lute mind,
It blends beauty with valour, with
grace melancholy;
Till the soul, to the triumphs of passion
resign'd,
Grows insensate to fame and ena-
mour'd with folly.

So the axe to the trunk of the ivy was
laid,
And the fowls of the air from its
branches were driven;
And it's leaves which the altar in beau-
ty array'd,
To pale desolation were ruthlessly gi-
ven.

Then the wild bee complain'd as she
sought her lov'd flowers,
'Oh! why are the blossoms so tedious-
ly coming?'
And zephyr inquired for the evergreen
bowers,
Where her voice had kept tune to
the bee's gentle humming.

—Yet nature proclaims, 'that securely
in earth,
'Sleeps a root of the ivy, it's honours
renewing;
'And when time's ling'ring hand gives
the slumberer birth,
It shall wave in it's pride o'er the tem-
ple in ruin!"

THE RETROSPECT.

"I would not live life o'er again,
For all its joys, to share its pain;
Life's springs and pastimes tempt me not,
To wish its cares again my lot.
What tho' youth's devious course hath
been,
A chequer'd yet a cheerful scene!
Our pleasures to the world are known,
Our silent griefs are all our own!
'Tis sweet to view from sheltering bower,
The high-arch'd rainbow span the show-
er;

But he who still must 'bide the storm,
Cares little for the rainbow's form.
When memory seems t'obey the will,
She fails to cull the good from ill;
But true alike to joy and woe,
She calls them both, her pow'r to show.
Else in th' eventful vale of life,
Are scenes with joy and beauty rife;
Thoughts of imagination rare,
And forms as lover's fancies fair!
These from life's troubles could we take,
Their influence heaven on earth would
make;
The charm that dwells with death would
fly,
For who, with these, would wish to die!"

ANALECTA.

SOCIETY AND MANNERS IN TUSCANY.

(From Lady Morgan's ITALY.)

Society, as it actually exists in
Florence, presents, as throughout
Italy, two distinct phases. Taken
among the elders of the highest
classes, it preserves the unobliterated
stamp of the ancient regime of *Me-
dicis*; taken among the present gene-
ration of all classes, (and more par-

ticularly the male part of the population,) it is diversified by the changes, which the last thirty years have universally impressed upon all Europe. A more general distribution of property, a total change in public education, Lycées substituted for monasteries,* the bustle of military exist-

* Such of the church estates in Tuscany, as fell to the government in the revolution, have been restored by the piety of the grand duke. The *Padri Reformati* or *Minorites*, are said to have had the whole of their possessions restored to them. But the begging orders have multiplied *ad libitum*, and in proportion as the idle and vagrant have found them the surest and easiest means of existence. The honest Tuscan peasant, who would have turned the sturdy beggar from his cottage door, now beholds, if not with respect, at least with fear, some *Padre cercatore* arrive with his mule and panniers, containing vessels for oil and wine, which he assures the contributor "God and St. Francis will restore to him!"—while the *Madonna Sposa*, who sits shivering over her *caldanini* to save her fire, is obliged to share her little faggot with the holy beggar, who pokes his face against her casement and cries peremptorily, "Si fa l'accatto della legna."—"I am collecting wood for the convent." To this request authorised by church and state, she dares give no refusal; and having made her offering, she is permitted to kiss the cross of St. Francis, and to take a pinch of snuff from the friar's box—a holy relic, blessed by some hope, or consecrated by some martyr.

The grand duke encourages all this by his example. When the famous robber Guazzino was hanged, the monks del *Buon morire* surrounded him: and it having been intimated to the grand duke, that the church had pardoned this robber, and placed him under the protection of the Virgin, and that it was certain, through her intercession, he would go from the scaffold to paradise, his imperial highness is said to have piously ejaculated "*Che felicità!*" Such are the anecdotes afloat in Florence. If not authentic, they at least show the temper of the people.

Of these monks *del buon morire* a word may be said, as they peculiarly belong to the revived order of things in Italy. In cases of fever, at the expiration of the third day of the malady, the physician is obliged to call in a priest, (on pain of being denounced,) who arrives with all the ceremonious forms of the sacramental rite, as administered in Catholic countries, and whatever be the stage of the disorder, the room of the invalid is filled with smoky torches, and the noisy underlings of the church; but the moment it is known that any indi-

ence succeeding to the voluptuous indolence to which the youth were previously condemned, the sciences liberally encouraged and ardently pursued, and ancient superstition long rendered the butt of fashionable as well as philosophical ridicule, have inevitably separated sons from their fathers, by a moral distance greater than the lapse of ages have hitherto produced! Although the monastic institutions are restored in all their plentitude, though commerce is restrained, philosophy discouraged, and a military youth replaced (in appearance) by legions of monks and friars, more numerous in Florence than elsewhere, (Rome and Genoa excepted,) still the impulse that has been given works secretly but surely through the present generation, and breaks forth in those works of patriotism and national utility, to which the lives and fortunes of the chief among the younger nobility and gentry are devoted. While the growing information of the middle classes brought home to them, through their interests, through the falling off of their commerce, the revived interference of the priesthood, the weight of increasing taxation, and the discouragement of all liberal institutes, has hurried them forward over a century of improvement, and has placed them on a niveau with the population of Lombardy.

Yet ere the "*dernier rejeton*" of the old stock of aristocracy withers and falls off, to give place to the younger and more vigorous shoots, engrafted with the spirit of the age, it is pleasant to view them, like their own old pictures, presenting the precise forms and aspects and moral costume of their progenitors; and exhibiting to the curious and philosophic eye the results of that evil policy which merged the virtue and patriotism of the fifteenth century in the slavery and demoralization of the eighteenth.

The noble Florentine, of the old cast, of either sex, begins this troublesome life as the "*Bambino fasciato*,"* resembling an Egyptian

infant is fallen sick, the monks "*del buon morire*" force their way to the patient's bed, who, if he is a friend to social order, cannot die decently without their aid.

* The practice of swaddling infants is happily almost forgotten in England: it

mummy—the little form distorted by tight swathing up to the throat, and the little face purpled with the pressure of bandages, which drives all the blood into the head, and lays the foundation of future malady. If it survives these probationary bonds, and escapes from the knocking and tumbling of its flaunting, gaudy, over-dressed nurse,* whose carelessness has little to dread from the mother's quick ear or watchful eye, it is forwarded from one bondage to another. If a female, it is sent in earliest childhood to a convent,†

produces much distortion, and may account for the dwindled size of many of the old nobility of Italy. It is a fact, that the race which have grown up since the revolution are of a loftier stature than their fathers. The physiognomy, in like manner, of the French nation is much changed since that event. The middle classes in Florence have been the first to abandon the practice of swathing infants, though the priesthood, we were assured, have endeavoured to prevent this innovation. An English lady of high rank in Florence, assured me that she had vainly urged her nurse to vaccinate her own infant, when her nursing was undergoing the operation: she constantly refused, saying that her confessor had told her it was "flying in the face of God." Vaccination is considered as strictly jacobinical and revolutionary by all the adherents of the old regime.

* The nurse is the same important and troublesome person in Italy, as in England and elsewhere; for the position being a false one, and against the law of nature, brings its penalty along with it. During her office, the nurse assumes all the finery of the gala toilette of the Tuscan peasant. This induced Mr. Fordyce to suppose that her sash and finery were the livery of her station.

† It was Buonaparte's intention to have established such noble seminaries at Florence for female education, as had been founded at Naples and Milan by the French government: meantime he permitted three female convents to remain, for the education of the female nobility; so that the women have had fewer advantages than almost in any other states of Italy; and this accounts for their preserving many of the fatal habits of their ancestors. The *cavaliere servante*, in all the due forms of the good old times, is now exclusively confined to Florence, though by no means universal even there. I have however seen a matron mother enter a Florentine assembly between her *cavaliere servante* and her young and innocent bridal daughter, who was thus sent into the world with this fatal example before her eyes. No

there to remain until a suitable alliance presents itself; or, if that fails, to return perhaps to the paternal house; where, banished to an attic story for life, and far from the refining pleasures of social intercourse and the endearments of domestic affections, the victim pursues no occupation but that of conning the rubric taught at the convent, working the eternal Adam and Eve under the Tree of Knowledge, (with a serpent in the branches, to show the danger of seeking it,) and is thrown for all recreation on the legends of the old *Donna*, or the charity of some female friend, who begs permission of the mother to take the *Signorina* to drive to the Cascino,* or, once in a way, to go to the opera!

Prisoners for life to etiquette, the unmarried women of rank are never seen in the Florentine circles, and their bloom and their hopes wither together in the cell of a convent, or the garret of a palace. The life of the young married dame is, however, as free from restraint, as that of the hapless victim of celibacy is enslaved. After the birth of the son and heir, who is to carry on a name registered in history, she legislates for herself, independent of her husband, as her husband is of her: she forms her social establishment—places her cavalieri servante at the head of it, and issues that great law of Florentine society to all her subjects, to “*Vivere senza suggestione*.” To this *vivere senza suggestione* all yield—all submit—even vanity and the toilette strike their labours; and mornings are passed, even by the most determined coquette, on a sofa or couche, in a dishabille, to which the *senza suggestione* is most perfectly applicable. To this indolent indulgence, a walk in the *Mercato Nuovo*, (the Bond-street of Florence,) or the *Lung-Arno*, and most frequently alone, or with the cavalieri servante, forms an occasional interruption: the robe de chambre and large wrapping shawl are then

exposure, no reprobation, is adequate to this shameless and unblushing libertinism:—to such a mother as this, the hapless victim of circumstances, the libertine of necessity, is a respectable personage.

* The Cascino takes its name from a sort of royal Diary. It is a delicious drive along the Arno, richly wooded—the Hyde-park of Florence.

† “To live without ceremony.”

exchanged for the smart French *douillette* and large bonnett, which frequently shades such eyes and faces as are not always to be found under the chapeaux of the Rue Vivienne. Their costume is generally black; for in the streets a black dress affords the same protection in Florence, as the Turkish veil in Constantinople. The morning thus passed in loitering abroad, or lounging at home, (for here there are no domestic or maternal duties to perform,) an early dinner “*senza suggestione*” assembles the *habitués* of the family circle, which generally consists of the *cavalieri servante*, some favoured or obtruse *scroccone*, or spunger,* (a sort of *etat* in Florence, as is that of the *gallopin* at Rome,) some fashionable confessor or preacher, and occasionally, as the business of the household or the condescension of the masters induce, the *maestro di casa*, (the factotum of the family,) and *maestro dei signorini*, or preceptor of the young gentlemen, if they are educated at home. This last personage is generally the son of the Vinajo, or butler.†

* The *Scrocconi*, or Gallopin, belong to no party or class in Florence, and find their way to all. They are idlers of small means and good families; and are indifferent whether their hosts are Ultras or Liberals—Carbonari or Calderoni. Their political toleration is alluded to by Pulci, in his well-known lines—

“O Guelpha, o Ghibellina,
Ei la coccarda avea, della cucina.”

† The Vinajo presides over the cellarage, and the retail sale of the wines. His son, if he has one, is usually made a priest, as a step towards gentility; and in some instances becomes tutor to the little boys of his master's family, before they are sent to some monastic seminary to finish their education. This mode of tuition is reviving since the restoration; but is chiefly confined to the class here described. The young nobility of Florence, among the liberal party, are educated upon a very different principle. Men of the most eminent talent and universal information are employed for their instruction. Of this the youth of the family of Torrigiani are an example. The father's house is a Lycee, and his table is open to all the talent and acquirement of Florence, without distinction of rank. We have also often had occasion to witness the happiness arising from an improved system of domestic life, in the charming family of the prince Corsini, elder brother to the minister,

The *prima sera* succeeds to the dinner; and visits are received from those who are in the habit of paying them, or forming the circle of which La Signora della Casa is the centre, and in which it rarely happens any other lady disputes her supremacy, (for the Florentine beauties associate but little with each other). Upon these occasions the male relations, who have the immunity of hanging up their hats in the anti-room, drop in; and there are few circles which have not their privileged *Seccatore*, or *Bore*; a large and very ancient class, naturally arising out of a state of society, in which all important topics are forbidden, and men thrown upon trifles, become tedious in their discussions. As the time of the Corso at the Cascino approaches, the circle breaks up, a more brilliant toilette is assumed; and the difficulty of getting rid of time between the corso and the opera, induces the elegantes to “*far l'ora*,” as it is termed, or make out the hour, before the *bottegone*, the great shop; whence ices and lemonade are supplied to the long string of carriages which are drawn up before it. The “*senza suggestione*,” and “*far l'ora*,” are two very important words in the vocabulary of Florentine phrases, and form a commentary upon the dangling office of the cavalieri servante.* Still, with all the faults of

whose children are educated at home by able and accomplished persons of both sexes, under their father's eye. The fact is, the errors of the old regime in Italy, as in France, are confined to a very small party, and that party is fast fading into nothing.

* It is almost unnecessary to mention here a fact universally known, that throughout Italy, and particularly in Florence, within the last century, it was not unusual for provident parents to make a clause in the marriage articles, to secure to their daughters the advantage of a *Cavalieri servante* beyond the chance of a husband's caprice. The Cavalieri then, as now, was not admitted into the family, till after the birth of a son and heir. Even still, a husband avoids the ridicule of being much seen with his wife, notwithstanding Buonaparte's Jacobin institutions in favour of this innovation on the old continental manners; and if they are observed together in public, some “arch-wag” is sure to whisper in the Sposo's ear “*Avete fatto la pasqua*” in allusion to the temporary reform of manners, to which all

their education, and the prejudices bequeathed to them by their mothers, and advocated by a party whose interest it is to cherish and preserve them, the Florentine women, even of this class and cast, are full of graciousness and grace; and much of their reluctance to associate with foreign ladies, which has stamped them with an anti social reputation, and a want of all hospitality and attention to strangers, arises, it is said, from a consciousness of deficient education. Wherever they have received the benefit of instruction and good example, their quick and intelligent natures have responded to the influence; and some of the most agreeable women, as well as the finest private musicians with whom we were acquainted in Italy, we found in Florence. The Florentine matron was once the model of her sex; and she has still all the natural qualities for becoming so, whenever institutes more favourable to the virtues shall permit the development of her maternal affections, and call forth intellectual powers by the due exercise of her sensibility.

While females of the highest class, and a particular party, thus preserve the taint of the Medicean regime, the men of the same rank and principles, the true genuine Florentine nobles of the good old times, remain equally unchanged, and probably, until a generation shall have passed away, unchangeable. The married members of this class (and the number is daily diminishing) have all the toleration for the system of *Cecisbeism* which distinguished their worthy fathers; and though they are rarely cavalieri servants themselves, for the office is now principally filled by unmarried men, yet they live in great harmony and strict intimacy with the cavalieri servante of their wife; with whom it is pleasantly, but maliciously, said in Florence, they form a "triangolo equilatero." If this important personage is a man of rank and fortune, he is always "l'amico intimo" of the "good easy man." If, as sometimes happens, he is of a rank inferior to his talents and personal advantages, he becomes a very useful person in the family in various ways; he is a check

submit during that period appointed by the church to be kept holy.

on the maestro-di-casa, or vinajo, assists in letting out the spare apartments of the vast palace to the foreign lodgers, and sometimes rescues "il marito della sua Ganza," as he familiarly calls the husband of his liege lady, from that ruin, so frequently impending over the heads of the Tuscan nobility, by their neglect of their private affairs, and their leaving every thing in the power of their stewards and agents.† There is, in the remains of the old stock of nobles in Florence, the visible helplessness of men who have been long forbidden to take any part in public affairs, to exercise any profession, or exhibit any activity. Their *fattore*† manages all the details of their estates, of farms rarely seen, and of vineyards and olive grounds rarely visited. The maestro di casa is the head to which all is referred in town; and may be said to carry not only the intellect of his lord, but sometimes is the depository of his feelings also. For he is occasionally employed in such negotiations as Eleazar, the maestro di casa of Abraham, undertook to Mesopotamia. To the secretary is deputed the whole of the epistolary department, and letters of friendship or of business, or even of a more intimate nature than either, are all the product of his taste and pen, to which his excellenza only signs his ennobled name.‡ The old contempt

* Literally, "the husband of my love or mistress."

† Whenever an inquiry is made in Florence relative to the ruin of a noble family, the cause invariably, assigned, and mentioned with a significant shrug, is "*La mal amministrazione*," a negligent administration of affairs.

‡ The *Fattore* is thus satirized in Italian doggrel:

"Fatevi Fattore, e in un anno
Se non son ricco, io, è il mio danno."

§ The pretty note-paper correspondence, which occupies so much of the ladies' time in France and England, and calls forth so much of "*l'éloquence du billet*," is unknown in Florence. All intercourse not personal, among the *elegantes*, is there carried on through the verbal medium of the principal *cameriere*, or groom of the chambers; and one of the requisites for his vocation is a good memory and clear enunciation. I have received many an "*ambasciata*," (as every unimportant message is still called in Italy,) which has struck me with admiration for both those qualities, as displayed by the "*ambassador*." Some-

times this person is the herald of a long profession of "*amicizia*," sometimes of a friendly reproach; but most frequently the negotiator of preliminaries for a game of *minchiato*, a tiresome game, played with ninety-seven cards, (in which the Devil and the Pope are leading characters, for every card is a picture,) which frequently supersedes the opera, particularly with the devotees. This domestic plenipotentiary is usually announced by the servant in waiting, as *capo della famiglia*, or head of the family, of the marchioness or duchess ***. On his admission, after an obsequious bow, he draws up into a formal attitude—hems—clears his voice, and then begins with—*La Signora Contessa *** fa molti complimenti alla sua Eccellenza, e dice così*.—"The Signora Countess *** offers a thousand compliments to your Excellency, and says thus"—Then begins the "*così*"—minute and sententious to a very amusing degree.

The revenues of the great landed proprietors of Tuscany chiefly arise out of their olive-grounds and vineyards; and as there is little exportation, or wholesale trade, as every species of restriction now exists to harass and to menace commerce, the produce of the rich estates of Tuscany is of necessity disposed of by retail at home. The influence also of the ancient mercantile manners on men to whose immediate ancestry the pomp of title was unknown, is such, that a species of little shop is opened, even in the noblest palaces; and as no license is necessary, the produce of the cellar is disposed of with a minuteness of detail, not to be surpassed by any little wine-house on the high roads of France. While the cardinal's hat, or papal key, or ducal coronet, are gorgeously sculptured over the massive portals of the palace, close beneath these insignia of the dignities to which the family have arrived, appears a little grated window, where the vinajo presides, and from whence hangs suspended an old flask; and while the splendid equipages of their excellencies roll into the court, their chief butler is perhaps filling a little pint bottle, held by some poor customer at the grated window, who has probably received in charity from the lord the very half-pence she is now paying

times this person is the herald of a long profession of "*amicizia*," sometimes of a friendly reproach; but most frequently the negotiator of preliminaries for a game of *minchiato*, a tiresome game, played with ninety-seven cards, (in which the Devil and the Pope are leading characters, for every card is a picture,) which frequently supersedes the opera, particularly with the devotees. This domestic plenipotentiary is usually announced by the servant in waiting, as *capo della famiglia*, or head of the family, of the marchioness or duchess ***. On his admission, after an obsequious bow, he draws up into a formal attitude—hems—clears his voice, and then begins with—*La Signora Contessa *** fa molti complimenti alla sua Eccellenza, e dice così*.—"The Signora Countess *** offers a thousand compliments to your Excellency, and says thus"—Then begins the "*così*"—minute and sententious to a very amusing degree.

back at his shop.* Such is the commerce which is carried on by many of those ultra-aristocratic nobles, the new dukes and marquises of Tuscany, the lineal descendants of those magnificent republican merchants of Florence, who opened counters all over the known world, who spent their days in their warehouses and counting-houses, kept their own books, and rode over the Alps and Appennines at the head of their own mules, proud of their honourable and honest calling, as they were disdainful of those empty titles, the ancient feudal nobility of Italy had taught them to despise.† While the high noblesse of Florence carry on this little retail commerce, and unite much rigid economy to their mercantile pursuits, they shrink from any contact with the mere cittadini, the professional merchants; and the distinctions which have in the last century sprung up between the first and second class, are only passed over by the present and rising generation, who resemble their ancestors of the 16th century much more than their fathers of the 19th.

The town life of the old ultra-noblesse of Florence is passed in morning lounges at church, at the opera, at the casino, or at *minchiate*: their country existence, if their *villeggiatura* in the autumn can merit the

* This custom, though general, is by no means universal. The Casa Capponi, Ginori, Pucci, Corsini, and a hundred others, *hang out no bush*, though they of course dispose of the produce of their estates: the custom chiefly prevails with those ultra-nobles, who adhere to the Medicean regime. For the princes of that family had the meanness to become bucksters, with the ambition of being despots, as the following anecdote from Evelyn, who visited Florence in the year 1644, proves:—"In this palace (*Pitti*) the grand duke ordinarily resides, living with his Swiss guards after the frugal Italian way, and even selling what he can spare of his wines, at the cellar under his very house: wicker bottles dangling over even the chief entrance into the palace, serving for a vintner's bush."—Vol. I. p. 82.

† The Machiavelli family, who were staunch Guelphites, exchanged their feudal nobility for the citizenship of Florence. Nothing was more common during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries than to behold the feudal noblesse, the *Comtes Ruraux*, weary of their predatory life, and seeking at the gates of Florence to become enrolled amidst its citizens.—See Sismondi, Ital. Repub.

name, is equally inactive and unbeneficial. There are, however, few of the nobility of any description who have not from four to eight villas on their hands, at various distances from the capital. The unhappy passion of the Italians for building was more especially incidental to the Florentines, and arose there originally from a sort of political exigency. The true consequence of an old Florentine citizen lay in the numerous branches of his united and prosperous family—in the talents, industry, and social and political coalition of his brothers, sons, nephews, and grandsons, which rendered his name important and his faction formidable. The number of ALBERGHI, or houses which a family possessed in the metropolis and its vicinity, was its principal distinction, until the use fell into abuse; and what was a private good, became both a private and a public evil: and an ostentatious parade of half-empty palaces and uninhabited villas, destined to neglect by the impoverishment of the families, for whose younger and collateral branches they were intended, are all that remains of that well-founded desire to multiply *Albregghi*, which were to roof the vigorous sinews of the state. From the gates of Florence to the Appennines on one side, and to the Roman frontiers on the other, evidences of this fatal propensity meet the eye, in ruins romantically desolate, or in villas which, though sometimes occupied, are almost all neglected and dreary. Even the royal villas have something of this character; and none have wholly escaped it.* Within the city, besides the occupied palaces of the nobility, numerous edifices are to be seen, half-tenanted, over whose portals still hang suspended the three balls of the Medici,† the key of the Riccardi, the

* A Florentine nobleman observed to us, that he was fully convinced of the folly of keeping a number of villas; for which reason he meant to reduce his to four or five.

† These three balls, which always indicate the residence of a Medici in Rome, as in Florence, are in fact *three pills*, the arms of the Medici, who were originally physicians. From this great mercantile and banking house, the three balls of the pawnbrokers in England were probably borrowed—the first usurers established there having been Italians.

cardinal's hat of the Capponi, and of many other families, some of whose members have attained in the last century to that dignity.

While this morbid passion for building presses upon the pecuniary circumstances of the Florentine nobility, the bad taste it has produced in the two last ages of universal degradation, is at once striking and ludicrous. In the loveliest country upon earth, nature is every where displaced or neglected, to make room for the abortions of degenerated art; instead of green fences and flowery lawns, the eye rests upon hedges of granite and terraces of marble. The shade of porticos supplies that of groves; and towers, battlements, and turrets, are substituted for old woods and young plantations; whole lions prowl in plaster of Paris; eagles fly on leaden wings; and box cupids exhibit their grotesque forms amidst the verdant architecture of cypresses and of elms, cut into colonnades. In these villas the old nobles lead a life during their retreats from the heats of Florence as anti-rural as the sites they inhabit. Here they rise early to assist at mass, in the chapel, or great salone, celebrated by the family chaplain; who, with one or two ecclesiastical friends from Florence, makes up the principal society of the *villeggiatura*. A breakfast of chocolate is followed by the promenade, which is generally crept through on foot down the long strait moss-grown avenue. Dinner is served a little after midday; and is succeeded by a drive in the family carriage, which terminates before *twenty-four* o'clock, and brings the party home in time for the celebration of the *Rosario*, or evening service. A party at *minchiate* or *ombre*, closes the monotonous and monastic day. The life, however, of the *villeggiatura* of the old system is diversified, according to the ages of the party, by devotion or by gallantry, as the influence of the confessor or the cavaliere servante prevails; and as an opera of Rossini, or a sermon of the Padre Morgino, or Voragine, interests*

* The influential position of popular Methodist preachers in private families in Great Britain, gives a perfect idea of the favourite confessors or preachers in Italy, and differs from them only in degree. It is curious also to observe, that

the individuals who compose the evening "crocchio" of the rural retreat.

From these well preserved pictures of what has been, it is delightful to turn to the originals which belong exclusively to the present day, and which promise to justify, as their ancestors did before them, that splendid eulogium passed on the nation by pope Boniface the Eighth, that "the Florentine nation constituted a fifth element of the universe." ("La Nazione Fiorentina nelle cose umane e il quinto elemento.") Names the most influential in Florence, by the rank, the fortune, and worth of their owners, are again blazoning forth on the lists of patriotism, and taking the surest and most indestructible means to forward national prosperity and illumination, by contributing their time, talents, and fortunes, to the promotion of national education.

Public education to a certain extent, has been promoted in every part of Italy, and in almost all ages. For the clergy, having taken its direction into their own hands, and given it that tendency which was most useful to the interests of the church, have considered it a branch of that charity they are called upon to preach; and have encouraged the foundation of seminaries, in which even more than the elements of in-

while the recruiting officers of the disbanded forces of the Church of Rome are beating a *reeille* on the continent, the *Church Militant of England* daily increases in the zeal of proselytism. When we were at Geneva, the peace and unanimity of the most enlightened, the most worthy, the most truly Christian people of Europe, was for a time disturbed by the proselyting Protestantism of an English missionary, whose wealth provided him with more means than one of conversion. The common sense of the people obliged him to retreat, but not till he had sown the seeds of religious discord in the bosoms of many families, who, until his arrival, knew not what discord was. But this was nothing. An English Protestant missionary visited Florence shortly after the restoration: he was one of the riders of the Bible Society, and endeavoured to distribute *Diiodati's Italian Translation of the English Bible*. The truly Christian toleration of Italian Catholicism left him unmolested; but his mission failed in toto: priest for priest, and sect for sect, the Florentines preferred their own.

struction were gratuitously imparted. The liberality of the Tuscan merchants of the twelfth century freely seconded this disposition, or more probably acted from an independent impulse. In almost all the great communes public schools were then founded, in which reading, writing, the first operations of arithmetic, and the rudiments of Latin grammar were taught. Leopold, sensible of the benefits derivable from such institutions, multiplied them in proportion to the necessities of his age; and thus he disseminated instruction, even through the smallest villages of Tuscany. In the year 1778 he likewise founded four girls' schools in Florence, one in each division of the city, which, under the superintendence of Marco Cavoni, acquired a consistency that has carried them through the storms of the revolution; and they now give, conjointly, instruction to about nine hundred children, who are taught reading, writing, arithmetic, needle-work, embroidery, weaving of ribands, linen, and cloth, both plain and figured; and they are preserved in a state of discipline, cleanliness, and silence, which is rarely maintained in such establishments. To these institutions the writers of Tuscany attribute much of the peaceable character of its citizens, and the extreme rarity of atrocious crimes; and it cannot be doubted that the supposition is well founded: but the circumstances of the present times render it necessary not to omit another condition essential to making even a good education available, and which is found also in Tuscany—the facility of procuring profitable work. The peasantry are, upon the whole, well nourished and clothed, and they are not driven to dissolute courses, or to dishonest artifices, by an excess of labour, or the difficulty of supporting a reputable existence. They have the leisure to profit by their school acquirements, while they are removed from the temptations of neglecting those maxims of moral conduct that are taught in such establishments.

This superior dissemination of instruction was, however, well calculated to draw off public attention from the advantages derivable from the Lancastrian system, which has taken such general root in Europe.

But a number of young noblemen, who had witnessed the economical and literary benefits flowing from that system in the schools of mutual instruction of France and England, determined to introduce them into Florence. A considerable subscription was raised under the auspices of Signori Ridolfi, Pucci, Serristori, Tempi, Altoviti, San Galletti, and Tartini, all noblemen of the highest rank and consideration; and a school was established, in which the London system of instruction is rigorously and successfully put in practice, and in which two hundred and thirty children are taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. Another school, conducted on similar principles, has been established, at the exclusive expense of the count Girolamo di Bardi, which contained an hundred and twenty scholars. In this school the count has, however, made some additions to the Lancastrian system, chiefly in respect of the progressive development of mind. The arithmetical processes are demonstrated through tangible images, presented by a species of abacus; and instruction in reading and writing is made subservient to a system of information, which, beginning with physical notions of man, and of the animals and elements by which he is surrounded, leads the pupil to a knowledge of the Deity, and thus unites the two great necessities for moral conduct, obedience to the divine will, and earthly happiness resulting from its observance. There are also some peculiarities in the method of teaching to write, which are considered as improvements. We visited with great pleasure both these establishments; not only on account of the excellent personages, under whose care they had been established, and who honoured us with their friendly attentions during our visit to Florence; but for the order, cleanliness, and diligence we found reigning within their walls, and for the pleasure of witnessing so many happy countenances, with eyes beaming intelligence, and sparkling with the consciousness of deserving approbation, and obtaining distinction.

The difficulties which were to be overcome in the establishing of these schools, required all the ardour and all the perseverance of their generous founders. The government has

hitherto been less than neutral towards them; and though the clergy have been far from opposing that blind and besotted opposition to such establishments which degrades the same order in France—the Ignorantins of Italy have not been altogether indifferent to their progress.

There was, besides, the *vis inertiae*, of a large mass of ignorance and prejudice to overcome among the elder nobility, who, as Petrarch has well observed on another occasion, “mistake their own indolence and slowness for gravity and caution; and despise with an immovable constancy of mind, whatever they cannot be made to understand.”*

Before we left Florence the grand duke had professed some curiosity, excited by the decisive success of the schools; but whether it was the curiosity of jealousy, or of emulation, did not appear. The Agricultural Society (*Accademia de' Georgofili*) also sent a commission to visit these establishments, which they wisely considered as by no means indifferent to their own immediate pursuits; and the report drawn up by the commissioners will doubtless tend to a wide dissemination of the system through the provinces. It is thus that the theoretical and abstract character of reform, which necessarily accompanied the breaking out of the revolution, has by the mere force of circumstances given place to a more practical and detailed effort at improvement; and the impetus thus given, while it is more serviceable to human happiness, is more certain in its career, and more constant to its object.

The commerce pursued by the wealthiest and most ancient families of Lombardy and Tuscany was always a subject of contempt to the feudal nobility; and most of all to the French *Præux*, who, according to Boccaccio, afforded them no higher epithet than “*Cuni Lombardi*,” (Lombard dogs). The false views

* “Credimi, Giovanni, molti fatti, che sono frutto di pigra mente e di ozio, sono tribuiti a gravità e consiglio. Sovente gli uomini disprezzano quello di cui vivono disperati; ed e natura dell' ignorante lo spregio di ciò che non vede, e il desiderio che niuno giunga dove egli non vale a giungere.”

Lettera del Petrarca al Boccaccio, riferita nel Giorn. Arcadico, No. 1. p. 10.

of grandeur introduced by the German influence under the Medici, contributed also to render the Florentines ashamed of a calling which had founded the prosperity of their nation. As dukes, marquises, and counts multiplied, the genuine Tuscan merchant disappeared; and trade and wealth, liberty and arts, all fell together. Still the philosophical legislation of Leopold proved that the genius of the nation, though long latent, was not wholly extinct: under the impulse of his liberal institutes, something of the ancient spirit, ancient activity, and ancient enterprise, revived.

The late Marchese Ginori, (a name oft repeated in Tuscan story, whose ancestor was the friend and correspondent of Machiavelli,) noble by birth, rich in circumstances, was among the first of the Florentine aristocracy who was roused from the luxurious lethargy in which the youth of Tuscany dreamed away life on the flowery shores of the Arno. He employed some years in visiting foreign countries, and most particularly England. He was there struck with the benefit derived by nations from manufactures and trade; and, on his return to that country which had once set an example of commercial industry to all others, he busied himself in speculations consonant to the activity of his nature and his sentiments of patriotism. He projected a port in the marshes of Grosseto, and colonized it at his own expense. He freighted a ship to the Indies, to bring back some of its most precious natural productions; and so far back as 1765, flocks of *Angora* goats were seen grazing on the lawns of his villas. He established also a porcelain manufactory on his own estate, and within the park of his favourite seat, *La Doccia*.* The

* The late marchese Ginori has another claim to celebrity, in the world of gallantry and literature, as the friend and protector (in the modish sense of the word) of the famous Corilla, said to be the original of Madame de Staël's *Corinna*, and the most noted improvisatrice of her day. Corilla was a peasant-girl of Pistoja: having discovered a poetical (or rhyming) talent, she was noticed by some gentleman in her neighbourhood, who sent her to Florence and paid for her schooling. Her youth, beauty, and talents, captivated the heart of the marchese Ginori: she became his pupil, his

son and heir of this clever and excellent person was still in childhood when the revolution broke out. Involved in all the inevitable activity and vicissitude of that energizing period, he added to his father's example the benefit of a liberal education; and the results of both were alike favourable to his own and to his country's interests. The present marchese Ginori visited France and England, the manufactories of Wedgwood and Sevres; and the establishment of his father, which was little more at his death than the concern of an amateur, became a successful competitor with the most perfect in Europe. With a large private property, and a noble name, this worthy descendant of the Ginori of the fifteenth century, was not ashamed to present himself as a manufacturer, and to mingle the pursuits of a man of fashion with those of a merchant. While hundreds are maintained by this es-

protegee, and his mistress. From his taste and liberality she enjoyed every sort of advantage but that which her frailty had forfeited; and her lover, in the vanity of his passion, took her to Rome, where, it is said, his influence, and that of Corilla's beauty on the heart of a certain *Monsignore*, rather than her genius, obtained for her the honour of a triumph denied to Tasso; and she was crowned in the capitol, as Petrarch was in glory, and as Baraballo was in derision, by that arch mystificateur, Leo the Tenth. The Italians had already learnt to laugh at such exhibitions; and pastiquades and satires, *comme s'il en pleuvait*, fell on the head of the Sibyl, and of Monsignore, her reverend protector.* Shortly after, the marchese Ginori, obliged by his rank and fortune to make a suitable alliance, married the mother of the present marquis, a lady of an illustrious house, and *Maggiordoma* to the archduchess. On this occasion, he settled a handsome income on the *Corilla*, who, for the rest of her life, lived *senza suggezione*. She died in 1793; and general Miollis, who then commanded the French Republican army in Italy, placed an inscription over the door of her house in the Strada Forche, where future Corinnas may read, in large characters, that

“Qui abito Corilla in Seccolo
Decimo nono.”

* One of these epigrams ran as follows:—

“Ordina e vuole, Monsignor Mazzei,
Che sia cinta Corilla del alloro,
E non si tirin buccie, e pomodoro
Sotto la pene di baiocchi sei.”

tablishment, a considerable addition is made to the revenue of the proprietor. But though this be a consideration rarely neglected by Florentines of any rank, (who are accused, even by each other, of never suffering the *main chance* to slumber,) still the manufactory of *La Doccia* has nothing of the sordid character of a mere tradesman's speculation. It is evidently the passion of a man of taste—the object of a benevolent citizen, seconded by a liberal fortune, and ennobled by patriotic intentions, and by liberal and philosophical views. This manufactory forms an extensive colony, within the proprietor's own demesne, a few miles from Florence. The families of the workmen are lodged in small and pretty buildings round the establishment, with all the advantages of cleanliness, comfort, and newly introduced accommodations. There is an admirable school for the children—for the youths educated to succeed their fathers; there are also schools for drawing, and other arts connected with the trade. To these a musical academy is added for recreation; concerts are performed twice a week by the pupils, and balls are frequently given in order to substitute innocent amusements for the dissipations of the wine-house, or the idleness of the city. A handsome gallery occupies the centre of the establishment, which is filled with casts from the antique; and the classical groups executed in the beautiful biscuit of *La Doccia*, bears evidence of its being frequently consulted.

Of the blessed results, in a moral point of view, of this noble establishment, we had a full opportunity of judging during our visit to *La Doccia*, and our intercourse with its hospitable master. We happened to arrive there on a Sunday, and were forcibly struck, as we approached the manufactory, by the appearance of the groups seated beneath the sheds of their comfortable cottages. There was nothing of the squalor so often visible in manufacturing districts, where confinement and labour are only exchanged for licentiousness and intoxication—all were in gala dresses, the youth of both sexes remarkably healthy and fresh, and the elders respectable, both in their appear-

ance and manner. The marchese Ginori, who accompanied us, addressed them by name, as we drove slowly along; and as they familiarly walked beside the carriage, with their hands leaning on the windows, he reminded them of the ball which was to be given in the evening at the villa—a reminiscence evidently unnecessary, though kind, as they were all dressed for the occasion; and many asked him if they might come after the benediction (given after sun-set). We had, in fact, scarcely risen from dinner, and were taking coffee in one of the many old-fashioned saloons of this very antiquated chateau, when the green before the window was over-spread with the eager guests invited to the expected ball. Though the sun still lingered on the *Val d'Arno*,* Signore Ginori ordered the villa to be lighted, which it was with a profusion of wax-lights; and the peasantry and manufacturers were permitted to enter. They wandered through the various apartments, and chose the amusement which best suited their age and taste. The male elders sat down to cards; many of the youth assembled round the billiard-table; but the greater number of both sexes adjourned to the *gran sala* or ball-room, where the musical pupils of the manufactory (the only band of the evening) were performing some pieces of music, previous to the commencement of the dance.

* This visit was paid to the *Doccia* in the month of November; and, according to the primitive villa habits of Tuscany, we dined at three o'clock. The evening was intensely cold, and we were struck upon this occasion, as upon many similar ones, by the insensibility of the Italians to the influence of cold. For our accommodation, a wood fire was lighted in one of the few hearths which this large fabric contained; but no one ventured to approach it except ourselves. When the Russian czar, Paul the First, visited Florence, he went shuddering about from sight to sight, observing, "In Russia one sees the cold—in Italy one feels it." The common people of Tuscany only approach fire for culinary purposes, and females of all ranks move about with their *caldanini** hanging on their arms. When seated, they place it under their petticoats; and this, in the extremest cold, is the only artificial heat they resort to.

* A sort of earthen porringer filled with the hot ashes of charcoal.

As the evening closed in, guests of higher rank arrived—the nobility who were at the villas in the neighbourhood,* the gentry and opulent farmers of the adjacent *poderi*, that class of rural residents who now lead in their villas a life of great gayety and hospitality; the true *senza suggezione*—strongly opposed to the monotonous dullness of the old *ultra-villeggiatura* of the high noblesse. It was delightful to observe that almost all the mothers were accompanied by their daughters—some children, and some lovely girls of that beautiful age, which in England gives life and grace to every assembly. As their bright Italian eyes sparkled, and their rich complexions glowed with the pleasure and exercise of the dance, it was impossible not to contrast them with the pale, moping *signorine*, whose heads are seen

* The condescension and kindness of the upper classes in Italy to their inferiors and domestics surpasses even that of the French—the great line of demarcation is drawn between the nobility and the *cittadini*; because in these ranks refinement and education have left none, but those which *conventional* habits dictate. The term "*caro*," or "*amico mio*," is constantly applied to servants; and it is not unusual to see a lady, when she stops to *prender il fresco* (inhale the air) on the *Corso* at Florence, conversing familiarly with the footman who leans over the back of her open carriage "*senza suggezione*;" and yet not the slightest impropriety is ever known to ensue. On our own experience, the fidelity, worth, and respectability of the Florentine servants is most remarkable; and we parted with our Tuscan valet, after nearly a year's service, with the same regret we should have parted with a friend. Many persons of respectable line in life, reduced by the vicissitudes of the late rapid changes, seek domestic service as an only resource against poverty. We were recommended to a person at Milan, who accompanied us to Como, and undertook to cook, besides various other scrub-like occupations. But observing that he paid much attention to some scores of *Rossini*, which lay always open on the kitchen table, and that cutlets burnt whilst *cantabili* were singing, I one day hinted my suspicion, that we had the *premices* of his culinary efforts; and as he succeeded equally ill in every other department, I asked candidly what he was—he replied with sang froid, while he tossed a *frittura*, "Io, Signora! Io son il primo Tenore dell' opera di Bergamo," (I am the first tenor singer of the opera of Bergamo).

poking over the high casements of their noble parents' palaces in Florence. The ball opened with the *Trescone*, the national dance of Tuscany, as the *Monferina* is of Piedmont. The nobles, gentry, manufacturers, and peasantry, all mingling and dancing promiscuously with the children of all ranks, made a very animated part of this national ballet. Then came French quadrilles, English country-dances, and waltzes—all punctually executed as to the figure, and with an *aplomb*, that made amends for the absence of more airy graces. The refreshments were abundant, and peculiar to the country. They consisted of light wines of all sorts, chesnuts, and sweet cakes: ices, lemonades, and sweet-meats, were served to the higher class of visitants. I observed upon this occasion, as upon every other, where an opportunity of seeing the Tuscan peasantry was afforded, that much of what has been said of their personal beauty, and the elegance of their costume, is extremely exaggerated.*

* The aspect, dress, morals and manners of the Tuscan peasantry vary according to the district they inhabit, and depend upon the physical qualities of their geographical position.* The inhabitants of the skirts of the Apennines differ much from those of the vallies, and the natives of the sea-coast from both. As far as our experience went, they appeared, generally speaking, brusque and rude, but gay and cheerful—the women resembling Welch peasants; fresh and chubby, tight in their dress, and universally wearing little round black beaver hats, with high crowns, and a stiff plume of black feathers. Their gala dress is principally characterized by a profusion of ribands floating from their shoulders, their waists, and their sleeves. The beaver hat is then replaced by combs and bodkins; and at all times their necks are encircled with pearl and coral—usually an heirloom of many generations' descent, but occasionally the purchase of years of labour, and the most rigid economy.

* The *contadini* of the neighbourhood of Florence are said to be corrupt and wealthy, and to abound in pearl and frailties. Those of the mountains of Pistoja, who are frugal, and live upon chesnuts, are robust, handsome and active. Those of Leghorn are remarkable for their pretty costume, their little straw hats and flowers, recalling something of Mrs. Radcliffe's picture of a Tuscan peasant.

On Letters and Letter-Writers.

[From the New Monthly Magazine.]

Some of the pleasantest moments in life are those which intervene between the arrival of the post and the opening a letter. It is the prettiest flurry—the happiest mixture of gratification and suspense. We love to toy with our own impatience, and prolong our uncertainty by the very means which we take to end it. To look at the date on the franked cover—(a franked letter is the best, because the longest)—to find that that tells us nothing, for, no disrespect to noble lords and honourable gentlemen, they are often sufficiently unintelligible; then to turn to the seal, and learn from the aristocratic coat of arms, the finely cut head, or the pretty womanly device, which of our correspondents is to charm us by kindness, or amuse us by wit; and then to cut carefully round the seal, or tear it hastily open, according as the writer is more or less dear. All this is delightful. The very adjuncts come in for a share in our love. Seals, for instance are always interesting. Many of the antique heads have a grace and beauty quite inimitable; a letter sealed with such a one conveys a valuable present, and some of the moderns are almost equally lovely. Milton's fine face makes as fine a seal; so does Raphael's. I wonder whether any one has ever adopted the beautiful head of cardinal Bentivoglio, with the name for a motto, "Ben' ti voglio;" the conceit seems too obvious to have escaped notice. Of the countless hieroglyphics which ladies use, that which pleases me best is the heart's-ease, a simple little flower, easy to imitate and difficult to mistake, whose rounded and shapely blossom contrasts well with the slender truncated leaves, and which is so fertile in pleasant associations as to require no motto. Heart's-ease, pensée, viola tricolor, love in idleness—no flower is so rich in pretty names. Such a seal is fit for all ages, occasions and conditions, partaking of the nature of the charming little plant, which flourishes alike in field or garden, and continues in bloom half the year round. Hand-writings are more interesting still, even those on the outside of letters. What infinite variety! what shades of difference! what family likenesses! what striking

contrasts! The best and the worst that I ever saw were those of two of our greatest scholars, the late professor Porson and Dr. P. The professor's was clear, delicate and beautiful; as fine, I suppose, as the Greek character for which he was so celebrated: the doctor's is utterly indescribable. The specimen, with a sight of which I was favoured, was a letter to a friend, which did not, to my eyes at least, afford the slightest clue as to the language in which it was written: I rather think it was English; indeed there were two short scratches near the top, which being interpreted might mean Dear Sir; as to the rest of the epistle, it might have been called Arabic with perfect impunity, nobody could have proved that the character belonged to any other tongue; I question whether the learned doctor himself could have decyphered it two days after date. Lawyers generally write a good deal alike; so do young ladies under twenty. But what a contrast between the short, stiff, compact, upright characters of the one class, and the fine, free, flowing lines—the absolute copperplate of the other: "As light and slender as her jasmines grow." The subjects on which they write are not more different.

Next to receiving a letter from a favourite correspondent is the pleasure of writing one—a pleasure which, in every sense of the word, does the heart good. How delightful it is to sit down and prattle to a dear friend just as carelessly as if we were seated in real talk, with our feet on the fender, by that glimmering fire-light when talk comes freest; sure that every half word will be understood, that every trifle will interest, and every story amuse; feeling, as it were, an echo in the mind which tells what will be the answer; seeing, as in a camera lucida, the reflection produced. How delightful it is to pour out all one's thoughts and fancies with such a certainty of indulgence and sympathy, and with what a glow of affection does one think of that indulgent and sympathizing correspondent. Even in addressing a common acquaintance, there is a kindlier feeling, a courtesy which tends to endear and to familiarize; and to a friend—oh! one never loves any of one's friends half so well as when

writing to them! Every act of kindness, every amiable quality rushes on the memory and the imagination, softened by the real absence, and heightened by the ideal presence. This constant sense of the presence of her correspondent is the greatest charm of that queen of letter-writers, Madame de Sevigné. We feel, throughout, that every thought, every word, is addressed to one individual, and to one only—the daughter, the idolized daughter, who filled that warm heart. The exquisitely humorous and entertaining letters of Madame de Sevigné's ardent admirer, Horace Walpole, want this attraction; but they have another, which almost compensates for its absence—that of giving, quite unconsciously, the finest possible portrait of his own peculiarities. A small collection of Voltaire's letters is called "*Voltaire peint par lui-même*;" this title would exactly suit the correspondence of Horace Walpole. There he stands, with all his tastes, natural and artificial; his love of lilacs and of old china, of stained glass and of Charles the Second's beauties, his schemes for flattering court-ladies, and his old bachelor ways; his delicious vanity, his amusing stinginess, his good humour and his bad. We are as perfectly acquainted with Strawberry Hill and its master, from reading his letters, as if we had lived there with him all our lives, especially from the letters to Mr. Cole, where he lets himself out more completely than any where else, lays aside his civility with his court dress, and puts on superciliousness with his night gown and slippers.

One of the most entertaining collections of noble epistles is that of lord Shaftesbury to Mr. Molesworth. His lordship had been advised to marry, and had fixed his attention on a cousin of his correspondent's, whom he employed as his plenipotentiary in the affair. Nothing can be more diverting than the way in which this grave philosopher, politician and valetudinarian, sets about making the best of himself in the eyes of a fair lady—his profound gravity; his awkward gallantry; his fits of shyness; the manner in which he contrives to convince every body that he is not in love, merely by dint of repeating that he is; and, above all, the high gusto with which

he falls into politics or morality, the return to the natural and the true, from that which was with him purely factitious and artificial—all this makes lord Shaftesbury's love-affair almost as diverting as that of Don Quixote. The dulcinea in question was a young heiress, and her father would have nothing to say to a lover, whose strong mind was probably as much a disadvantage as his infirm body. He himself seems sensible that the report of his "bookishness," as he calls it, was very little in his favour, and endeavours to erase the impression, by declaring that he has left off study and taken to lady's games. To prove that his offer was disinterested, as soon as his first courtship was fairly over, he made his addresses to a lady of small fortune, by whom he was accepted. He was too lucky in getting any wife; he deserved to have died an old bachelor, if only for saying a short time after his wedding, by way of compliment to the state, that he was almost as comfortable after marriage as before, at which he seems tolerably astonished. The best thing in lord Shaftesbury's letters is his theory of letter writing. He says to Mr. Molesworth, "It is really a solemn law which I impose on myself, in respect of my near friends, never to write but with the freedom, hastiness and incorrectness of common talk, that they may have all as it comes uppermost; and for this I can appeal to my late letters, and all that I have writ you on my love-subject, for I am confident I never so much as read over one that I wrote you on that head." If ever this theory was completely carried into practice, it was by Cowper, in those letters which throw open so charmingly his most charming character, and which have all the peculiar merits of his poetry, with a tenderness and sweetness, a spirit of indulgence and of love to his kind, which his poetry has not. That love returns with interest upon its author. No one can read his happier letters without feeling almost a personal affection for the man who wrote them, whilst those in which his bright spirit was clouded excite a painful pity, an overwhelming foreboding of his fate which strikes cold to the very heart. I know no tragedy, not even Lear,

so pathetic as the real history of Cowper.

I believe there is no regular collection of Hume's letters.* They are found sometimes scattered in different books, vigorous, lively and healthy as self-soon flowers. One of them in Dugald Stewart's *Life of Adam Smith*, is singularly delightful. Mr. Hume wrote to inform his friend of the success of the *Theory of Moral Sentiments*; and the manner in which he dallies with the good news, the pretty trifling, the sportive tossing about, are as graceful and good-humoured as the frolics of a child at play with a cowslip-ball. One can conceive nothing more gratifying to literary ambition than to be told of such a triumph by such a correspondent. Gray's letters are very clever, very poetical, very picturesque, but they want the good-nature, the constitutional kindness: respect and admire him we must, and we do; but to love a man dead or alive it is necessary that he should know how to love too. In this point of view Dr. Johnson's are admirable. Their style is, to be sure, any thing rather than epistolary, but they seem always written either to do good or to give pleasure, and the kindness and condescension of some of them—that in a large round hand to Mr. Boswell's little girl for example, can never be sufficiently praised.

Richardson's correspondence has been called disappointing. What did his readers expect? What did they desire? Surely more news of their old acquaintance; of Lovelace and Clarissa, of Clementina and Sir Charles. Richardson is himself so completely identified with his personages, that one has scarcely any other idea of him than as a sort of male grandmamma Shirley, nor of his flower-garden of young ladies, than as so many Lucy and Nancy Selbys, and Patty and Kitty Holleses in real life. We expect them to talk all Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison, varied with a little touch of Pamela. They do so, and we ought to like them the better for it. I don't suppose they would talk half so well on any other subject. When there is the delightful flirtation with lady Bradshaigh! The

* Our correspondent is mistaken. An interesting volume of Hume's private correspondence was published last year.

whole range of English comedy does not contain a more ridiculous situation than that of poor Richardson fretting and fuming in the Park, whilst his treacherous incognita is surveying him snugly at her leisure. And his doleful complaint! and her coquettish apology! and the quarrel! and the reconciliation! Oh! there is nothing better in Congreve. Four letters from Mrs. Klopstock in this collection are indescribably sweet and touching; her character, her situation, her early death, have an interest much heightened by her pretty foreign idiom. I doubt whether any Englishwoman could write English so beautifully—she would want the charming imperfection; and I am afraid, in spite of the gallant compliments so often lavished on female letter writing, that we Englishwomen are as inferior to men in epistolary composition, as we confessedly are in most other things. England has no Madame de Sevigné. Strong feeling has some times struck out flashes of womanly tenderness, or of a bold and noble spirit; such as the affecting note of lady Russel to her husband, or the manly and indignant letter of Anne, countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery; but these are only flashes. We have no Madame de Sevigné. We have, to be sure, lady M. W. Montagu, whose letters may vie with Pope and his whole galaxy for wit, and surpass them for ease; and her namesake, Mrs. Montague, almost as witty, till she unluckily became wise; and Mrs. Carter, Miss Talbot, Mrs. Hamilton, and Miss Smith, all so remarkable for unaffectedness and sound good sense; and Mrs. Wolstonecraft with her dangerous eloquence; and Mrs. Grant of Laggan, with her vivid picturesqueness, and her fine feeling of the beautiful and the fine. These we have, and for these we are grateful; but we have no Madame de Sevigné.

POETS OF RURAL LIFE.—COWPER.

[From the New Monthly Magazine]

There is scarcely a poet of any note in the annals of literature who has not expressed his enthusiastic admiration for the rural life. Yet a very small proportion of our bards have resided in the country, and, with few exceptions, we can scarcely name a set of men less apparent-

ly satisfied with seclusion, or whose practice has appeared more decidedly at variance with profession. We do not find fault with them for their conformity to their real notions of enjoyment; on the contrary, we think the world has gained much by it. But there is no occasion for any deception in the matter, and accordingly we find it is daily becoming a more simple and natural thing, if we may so speak, to be a poet. With all our admiration for departed genius, and, in individual instances, for its vast attainments, we cannot be insensible to this great charm of our modern poetry. We have done with poetical priestcraft. We see in our bards a race of men, not set apart, like Druids, for holy and solemn purposes, but mingling in our avocations, giving and collecting sweets from the social as well as from the solitary scene; men who feel keenly, and imagine promptly; men whom we are little inclined to take for our guides, "spiritual or temporal," but who nevertheless do sometimes quicken both body and soul; and while we think ourselves indebted to them for much that makes the rugged prospect of life look beautiful, we hold that the advantages of our communion are strictly mutual. Now and then a poetical Pope, or, if it pleases our readers better, a literary arch-druid, will start up, and plead for the almost-forgotten supremacy of the bard; but we, meanwhile, like not such extorted homage, and are better pleased with those wholesome, sweet, and life-cheering strains, which are evidently the product of minds kept in exercise by constant communion with their fellows, than with the lonely and mystical musings of the solitary dreamer. The retired poet is not, generally speaking, an agreeable character. We have no sympathy with a being who, while pretending to a more than ordinary relish for *natural*, seems to have little perception of *social* beauty. Give us the bard who can bring to our fire-sides the light and warmth of his genius; who can place in new and beautiful colours the circumstances of our daily lives; whose heart seems to be touched with human kindness. With all this, reason and experience tell us, may be joined a most exuberant imagination and a refined taste. Indeed, it is

remarkable, that poetical genius has generally thriven much better in society than in solitude. Even our best descriptive poets have seldom been secluded men. Nothing, it will readily be acknowledged, can be more exquisite than some of Shakspeare's descriptions: yet he did not spend his days and years in musing on the world of natural beauty. In accordance with this, we may observe that all his sweet and refreshing descriptions come in, in the way of digression: he pauses amid the hurry and business of action, to rest us with Lorenzo and Jessica in "the sweet moonlight;" and even while leading us along in the rapid career of ambition, he brings before our eyes, in lovely contrast, a view of the peaceful beauties of nature. None but a quick observer could have done this: but a habit of ready observation is chiefly to be acquired in active life; and hence it is, we think, that social habits are favourable to the improvement of the poetical character. It has been said, however, that retirement is desirable, not only or chiefly as it acquaints the poet with nature, but as it acquaints him with himself. This is very true; and we perfectly agree with Mr. Wordsworth;—

"Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a slave, the meanest we can meet."*

However, the poet who trusts to meditation upon his own mind alone for improvement, will, we fear, find himself in the predicament of the religionist, who relies, for his spiritual progress, on solitariness and self-watching. Both disdain the aliment upon which mind and heart are fed, and both are in imminent danger of starvation. Both also are liable to fall into that great error, the darling child of solitude, an overweening sense of self-importance, and a contempt of their brethren of mankind. In the little poem from which we have above quoted, we find much to censure. The man who can thus deliberately set at nought the advantages of communion with his fellows, who can remark upon the scandalous, trifling, and unprofitable discourse of some, leaving us to infer that such, and no better, is to be met with in the world, may find hearers to whom he can descant,

* Wordsworth's Poems, vol. ii. "I am not one," &c.

"Of personal themes, and such as *he* loves best,
Matters wherein right voluble *he is*:"

but can hardly expect to find listening ears, admiring eyes, and applauding tongues in every circle. We are apt to reckon the religious bigotry of Cowper the worst blemish of the Task. That bigotry, however, had in it nothing personal; and we can far better tolerate the timid Christian, when we see him shrinking from a world, whose practices he has learnt to conceive as evil, than we can bear with the man whose assumed superiority is that of intellect, not of principle. But of all people, the poet, perhaps has the least excuse for being a dogmatist. "To him all that is interesting or amiable in human character, all that excites or engages our benevolent affections: all the truths which make the heart feel better and more happy—all these supply materials out of which he forms and peoples a world of his own, where no inconveniencies damp our enjoyments, where no shades darken our prospects." His object is, to catch the fleeting ideas of grandeur and of beauty, from whatever sources derived, by whatever objects suggested; to fix them and embody them for himself, for us, and for ages to come. Perish the criticism that would damp the ardour of his research! and perish the odious spirit of sectarianism, that would throw a shade over the glories of poetical liberty!

We have thus prefaced the few remarks we intend to make upon the poems of Cowper, in order to preclude the idea that our partialities are, *generally*, in favour of retirement as the nurse of poetical talent,—an idea to which our fervent admiration for the Bard of Weston might possibly lead. We think the case of Cowper, however, a peculiar one. From the constitution of his mind it appears that his life must either have been *that* which it really was, or a scene of excessive misery. All speculations, therefore, upon what he might have been under different circumstances, are cruelly misplaced. We regard him as one whose lot was cast for him without revoke; and we think of him as a poet who had nothing to do with systems, whose peculiarities were those of his own mind, and who

wrote simply as he felt or imagined. Every one must allow that in spirit he was far from a dogmatist. His gentle and affectionate heart taught him the value of those social pleasures from which he felt himself forever excluded:—hence there is not the smallest particle of the leaven of selfishness in his censures of the vices of society; not one word from whence we can reasonably infer that the poet was retaliating upon the world the wrongs which he had received. The character of Cowper's mind, though acute and penetrating, was not, doubtless, very enlarged. He was too timid a Christian to be a good metaphysician, and has written nothing which it requires any stretch of the faculties fully to comprehend. In this respect, indeed, he differs widely from Mr. Wordsworth, who, though often too mystical for the common run of poetical readers, is far better acquainted with the human mind. Mr. Wordsworth, however, when he stoops from his highest and most successful flights, is sure to affront common readers by being over trite and obvious. Not so Cowper. Natural and easy as he is, he is never babyish. The man, the scholar, and the poet, never are forgotten. We should be at a loss to point out any author throughout whose volumes we could discern the presence of such perfect and entire simplicity—yet only in one or two instances does it seem to have led him into details inconsistent with the dignity of poetry.

A great deal has been said upon a question which we would fain avoid, if remarks upon Cowper could be written without touching upon it. It has been thought improper to blend devotional addresses to the Supreme Being with appeals to the imagination; and poets who have done this are considered by many as having infringed on the province of fancy, and sinned against good taste. We perfectly agree with those who only mean to protest against our implicitly adopting the poet's creed; but, loving and respecting religion ourselves, we cannot see any thing objectionable in giving her cause all the advantage which good taste and good scholarship can bring to it. A great many people, doubtless, will admire such a poet as Cowper for his piety, who know little about poetry—but where is the

harm of this? Such people, if they are not gifted by nature or education with an understanding capable of appreciating the highest kinds of poetical merit, are alive to the perception of beauty of some sort, and seeing religious and moral truths presented before them in an amiable and striking point of view, they catch a degree of refinement to which they would otherwise have been strangers. It is no slight merit to have raised and purified the devotional feelings of numbers, as Cowper has done.

But the Poems of Cowper have often been accounted melancholy, and melancholy they are to us, who read them with the lively recollection of the poet's life before us. Yet it is not the fashion of our day to complain of our bards for indulging in depressing contemplations—many are allowed to mourn like Cowper, who know but little of the hope that, in his darkest hours, kept its station near him, ready to comfort and cheer every moment which the black fiend of melancholy deigned to spare to her victim. It has cheered us, many a time, to think that over so dark a life such gleams of comfort came; that such awful visitations of evil should be interspersed with such exquisite perceptions of good; that the miseries of this life should be so often relieved by clear and decisive anticipations of that which is to come. Religion and nature are infinitely endeared to us while we observe their beneficial influence on the poet's mind.

In conclusion—to wish Cowper other than he was, except with regard to his indescribable sufferings, is almost impossible. But we do not wish for other Cowpers. That depression which unfitted him for the world, kept him from the desire of literary dictation. He stood alone—but his loneliness was not the effect of pride. For most poets a very different lot is desirable.

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